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TAGS: [PTER](#) [KCRM](#) [EAIR](#) [ASEC](#) [SZ](#)
SUBJECT: SWISS ARREST MEMBERS OF AN APPARENT ISLAMIST
TERRORIST CELL

REF: A. TD-314/35300-06

- [B](#). TDX-315/34517-06
- [C](#). TDX-315/30502-06
- [D](#). TD-314/29060-06

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Carol Urban, Reasons
1.4 b/d

1.(S/NF) Summary: Swiss Federal Police arrested several members of a Salafist terrorist cell on May 12 and 15 following months of surveillance. The action, Swiss government sources (protect) told Embassy officers, was taken due to political pressure after press leaks claimed that the cell was looking into acquiring rocket propelled grenade launchers to use against commercial airlines. According to Swiss government contacts (protect), one cell member also reportedly made reference to a potential attack on the World Cup Soccer championship in Germany (scheduled June 9-July 9).

The Swiss press is conflating this story with its continued coverage of Claude Covassi, a former undercover operative for the Swiss internal intelligence service, DAP, who has been on a campaign to discredit his former employer. End summary.

2.(S/NF) Per ref A & B information, the Swiss police arrested several suspected members of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG) in Zurich and Basel on May 12 and May 15. The suspects were arrested for petty crimes, but some had been under surveillance on suspicion that they were planning attacks, including possibly the use of an RPG to target Israeli or American aircraft in Zurich or Geneva. The Swiss press reported on May 23 that a rocket-propelled grenade launcher had been confiscated at one of the suspects' homes, but the Embassy has since learned that there was no RPG found by Swiss authorities.

3.(S/NF) Among the eight individuals arrested, two key suspects were LIFG members Badr al-Juwaydi (DOB 29 July 1971) and Rifa'I Bassam (DOB 7 June 1986). A complete list of those arrested is at ref B. The two may also have ties to the Algerian Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC). In the investigation, Swiss police cooperated with counterparts from Germany, France, Spain, and the UK. Swiss sources report that, in the course of his activities, Juwaydi has been in contact with other Islamic extremists, including Ansar al-Islam suspect Burhan Barazanji (ref C) and al-Qa'ida Hamburg cell suspect "Mzoudi" (most likely Abdelghani Mzoudi, see ref B).

4.(S/NF) Swiss contacts told Embassy officers that the decision to arrest the LIFG suspects stemmed from recent Swiss press reports concerning other investigations. Another source claimed that Federal Councilor and Justice Minister

Christoph Blocher wanted the surveillance effort wrapped up for budgetary reasons. Sources also said that Swiss police had planned to incarcerate the suspects in advance of the World Cup Soccer championships. Juwaydi had reportedly warned a friend in Germany to leave the country during the World Cup matches (ref A). The motivation for the early arrests were probably a combination of all of these factors.

5.(S/NF) The Swiss press, led by the German-language tabloid "Blick," has featured articles based on apparent leaks from several ongoing investigations. While the press reporting appears to conflate the Juwaydi/Bassam investigation with others, much of the content tracks what sources have told the Embassy. One area of confusion is the role played by former Swiss undercover operative Claude Covassi in revealing the RPG plot. Covassi made headlines two months ago in divulging his role as informant for the Swiss internal intelligence service, DAP, in the Geneva Islamic Center run by Hani Ramadan -- grandson of Muslim Brotherhood founder Hasan al Banna and the brother of controversial Islamic scholar Tariq Ramadan. Covassi claimed that the DAP had tasked him to implicate Hani Ramadan in extremist activities, but that when he decided that Ramadan was clean, he fell out of DAP's favor. Covassi also claimed that he was sent to Syria to inform on Jihadist smuggling operations into Iraq. Covassi claims to be in hiding (rumored locations include Egypt and the Canary Islands) out of fear of Swiss authorities.

Comment

6.(S/NF) This front channel report is based on the referenced TDs, with some additional press reporting, and should be treated as a summary of those reports, rather than a source in and of itself. Those seeking additional information on this investigation should consult other USG channels.
Urban